

title. His boys got that chance this year with the inaugural PIAA Dual Meet State Championships. Lead by Head Coach Thad Turner and Assistant Coaches Roland Reitz and Matthew Smith, the Raiders sought inspiration from senior Keith Ferraro, whose strength exhibited after the loss of his father is nothing short of heroic. Other seniors include Matt Geer, Jason Gilligan, Jason McKinney, Jeremy Reitz, Randy Stout, and B.J. Thomas. The junior team members are Casey Belfiore, James Bishop, Brad Cieleski, B.J. Darr, Garrett Hurd, Emil Johnson, Jeff McLaughlin, Eric Painter, and Clint Puller; along with sophomores Rudy Bullers, Gian DeLoia, Trevor Doust, Joel Hammond, Mark Himes, Mike Miller, Josh Sammons, and Justin Steiner; as well as freshman Nick Neil.

For Brookville High School, the 1999 wrestling season demonstrates not only greatness of body and mind, but also perseverance of spirit. Mr. Speaker, as their classmates and community celebrate their inspiring accomplishments today back in Pennsylvania, I ask you to join me in thanking the young men and coaches of the Brookville Raider wrestling team for showing us all that even the shadow of adversity, continued belief in a unifying goal will bring shining success.

MEDICARE ANTI-FRAUD EFFORTS: HOSPITALS BACKING OFF UP- CODING

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 14, 1999

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, for the past 14 years, hospitals have been up-coding their Medicare bills. Each year, the "complexity" of the cases that hospitals treat is said to increase. Like grade creep in a school, the way patients' illnesses are graded in a hospital gradually creeps upwards, and the taxpayer and Medicare pay more and more.

Last year, for the first time, the "complexity" of the cases declined.

As the following memo makes clear, this has something to do with the Administration's fight against waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicare and in the well-publicized case against Columbia-HCA.

Taxpayers and Medicare beneficiaries should congratulate HCFA, the HHS Inspector General, and Justice for their efforts. Vigilance against fraud is a major reason that the life of the Medicare hospital trust fund has just been extended from 2008 to 2015.

Date: November 19, 1998

From: Office of the Actuary

Subject: Analysis of PPS Hospital Case-Mix Change between 1997 and 1998

The prospective payment system, PPS, uses diagnosis related groups, DRG's, as the basis of payment. Each DRG is assigned a relative weight which is used in the payment formula. Average case-mix is the discharge-weighted mean of all the DRG relative weights. We have monitored changes in case-mix since the beginning of PPS in FY 1984. From FY 1983 through FY 1997, case-mix increased every year. FY 1998 is the first year we have measured a decrease in case-mix.

Based on information available through October 1998, we have measured a change in PPS hospital case-mix in FY 1998 of -0.74 percent. When we receive further updates for FY

1998, we estimate that the final measure of the FY 1998 case-mix increase will be in the neighborhood of -0.5 percent. Since FY 1998 is the first year that case-mix has decreased under PPS, I have undertaken a study of the reasons for this decrease. My study found the following:

As is usually the case, some DRG's contributed to an increase in case-mix while others contributed to a decrease.

The new DRG's for back and neck procedures increased case-mix 0.05 percent.

The redefinition of DRG 116 in combination with DRG 112 increased case-mix 0.59 percent.

The change in coding of pneumonia cases decreased case-mix 0.23 percent.

DRG's in complex-noncomplex pairs decreased case-mix 0.82 percent.

Non-pair DRG's decreased case-mix 0.27 percent.

While assessing cause-and-effect is always difficult, I believe that some of the decrease in case-mix is likely to be attributable to certain efforts to combat fraud and abuse. The Department of Justice investigation of the Hospital Corporation of America, subsequent indictments, and the possibility of triple damages may have prompted hospitals to code diagnoses less aggressively—resulting in fewer complex cases. Similarly, the inspector general's investigation of pneumonia cases may have caused the significant shift of admissions from the more expensive respiratory infections DRG's to the simple pneumonia DRG's. HIPAA provides continuing funding for fraud investigations, which may have a continuing impact on increases in case-mix.

THE TAX FREEDOM RESOLUTION

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 14, 1999

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I have introduced the "Tax Freedom Resolution", H.J. Res. —, that will repeal the 16th amendment to the Constitution. This resolution will reverse one of the most destructive amendments to the U.S. Constitution and deny Congress the ability to lay and collect taxes on income.

I believe that the 16th amendment has created a system that is economically destructive, impossibly complex, overly intrusive, unprincipled, dishonest, unfair, and inefficient. Now is the time for us to restore freedom to the American taxpayer.

The tax Freedom Resolution is the first step to do just that. It will encourage an open, honest and constructive debate about why our current tax structure has failed and what we can expect in a new system.

You may ask why we need to repeal the 16th amendment. The answer is quite simple. The current system cannot be fixed. It has already undergone 32 major revisions and 400 minor ones in the past 40 years. Each time the revisions has been made the system becomes more and more complicated and unfair.

The IRS has hundreds and hundreds of different tax forms, plus countless more to explain how to fill out these forms. The original Tax Code had 11,400 words in it. Today it has well over 7 million words.

Our current system also discourages savings and investment while hampering economic growth. Complying with the Federal Tax

Code costs taxpayers more than \$250 billion each year. In 1991, the Tax Foundation reported that small corporations spent a minimum of \$382 in compliance costs for every \$100 they paid in income taxes.

In addition, several economists have said that replacing the current tax system will cause interest rates to go down and savings and capital investment to increase.

Right now, we have a system that stifles opportunity by picking winners and losers. It's a system in which Washington, DC, decides what is best for the American people instead of letting the people decide what is best for America.

The Federal Government simply takes too much money out of people's pockets. As recently as 1982, Americans paid only 19.9 percent of their income in taxes. New data reveals that in 1998, Americans paid 35.4 percent of their income in taxes—the highest level in history and increasing each year. In fact, Tax Freedom Day 1998 was May 10th, which means that Americans are working, on average 129 days before paying off their total tax bill. We must stop this confiscatory trend.

By embracing the principles of FREEDOM, we can create a system that is Fair and simple, that Reduces the federal bureaucracy, that Encourages savings and investment, that is Efficient, that Drives the economy, that creates Opportunity for all, and that puts More money in American pockets.

Fundamental and comprehensive tax reform will be one of the most profound and liberating changes our nation experiences. It is time for all of us—whether you support a flat tax, a consumption tax, a value-added tax, or a national sales tax—to come together and focus on our common goal: Replacing the current system. The Tax Freedom Resolution gives us the chance to do just that and at the same time restore FREEDOM to the American taxpayer.

BATTLESHIP RESOLUTION

HON. SONNY CALLAHAN

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 14, 1999

Mr. CALLAHAN. Mr. Speaker, the esteemed crew of the battleship U.S.S. *Alabama* will hold their annual reunion in the city of Mobile, Alabama, during the third week in April. I would like to take this opportunity to express to these men the undying appreciation which their fellow Americans share for their proud service to our nation and the world.

The U.S.S. *Alabama*, a South Dakota class battleship, was built in the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Virginia. Following her commission on August 16, 1942, she was dispatched to the North Atlantic Ocean, where she and her crew proudly assisted the British Fleet in protecting convoys on the treacherous "Murmansk Run," which carried them from England through the North Sea to Russia, and brought the defending fleet into conflict with German warships and aircraft in occupied Norway.

After completing her service with the British Fleet, the U.S.S. *Alabama* was transferred to the Pacific Fleet. Her charge on the Eastern Front of the War was to provide invaluable support to U.S. ground troops, enabling them